

### **"Turf Tips" Mowing Best Practices**

Lawn care season is in full swing throughout most of the country now, and understanding proper mowing techniques can go a long way to promoting a strong, healthy lawn all season long.

Here are some helpful tips to consider when mowing this spring:

1. **Mulch mow clippings:** Returning your clippings to the lawn can save time (since you won't need to empty the bag) and reduce fertilizer need by 20-30%. While you can buy a special "mulching mower" (many newer models are engineered to "mulch mow" more efficiently), you can also turn your older one into a mulching mower by buying a plug for the grass catcher chute and switching to a mulching blade.
2. **Remember the 1/3 rule:** Don't remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade during any one mowing period. When you remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade, there is suddenly less leaf area for the plant to absorb sunlight and photosynthesize. This can lead to a "scalped" appearance that may take a few weeks to recover and weakens the plant in the meantime. Remember, if your lawn is vigorously growing during the spring, you can always raise the mower height up a bit, in order to keep the 1/3 rule, and then bring the mower height back down to the recommended range for the next mowing.
3. **Mow a little higher:** Different types of grasses sometimes have different mowing heights. Don't be tempted to mow your lawn too short, in search of the "golf course look." Many of the grass varieties used on golf courses were selected for and are adapted to lower mowing heights. That is not the case for most home lawn grasses. Mowing at the higher end of a grass's mowing height range helps it develop deeper roots, increases the amount of foot traffic it can take, and makes for an overall healthier lawn.

### **Mowing Height Guide for Common Lawn Grasses**

#### Cool-Season Grasses

Tall fescue	2 ½ - 3 ½ "
Kentucky bluegrass	2 ½ - 3"
Fine fescue	2 ½ - 3 ½ "
Perennial ryegrass	2 - 3"

#### Warm-Season Grasses

Bermudagrass	1 - 1 ½ "
Zoysiagrass (coarse texture)	2 - 2 ½ "
Zoysiagrass (fine texture)	1 - 1 ½ "
Centipedegrass	1 ½ - 2"
St. Augustinegrass	3 - 4"
Bahiagrass	3 - 4"
Buffalograss	3 - 4"

4. **Keep your mower blade sharp:** Mowing with a dull blade can cause the mower to tear and fray the grass blades instead of producing a clean clip. Start off with a sharp blade in the spring and plan to re-sharpen the blade mid-summer. Remember, drier conditions in the summer can make many grasses a little tougher to mow since the leaves may get a little more “stemmy”.

5. **Wash your mower:** Washing the underside of the mower will prevent grass clippings from getting “caked on” and improve the clip of your mower, as well as fuel efficiency. Be sure to unplug the spark plug beforehand! Usually tipping the mower straight back instead of to the side is preferred since there is less of a chance for the fuel tank to leak.



With 12 different lawn grass varieties, the ‘Grass Roots’ exhibit uses a range of different mowing heights to fit the needs of each one.